

Exhibit A

GREGORY ABBOTT

September 27, 2019

The Honorable Indira Talwani
United States District Court
District of Massachusetts
1 Courthouse Way, Suite 2300
Boston, Massachusetts 02210

Dear Judge Talwani:

Please accept the following as coming straight from my heart, written without any outside assistance. Despite the several "consultants" who solicited me insisting I needed them, the following words are totally my own, as they should be:

Your Honor, I grew up to embrace, even romanticize, the American Dream, where anyone regardless of background can carve out a good life by virtue of honest hard work. My parents, children of Syrian and Lithuanian immigrants, grew up during the Great Depression and couldn't afford college. But they were smart and worked themselves to the bone to make a better life for themselves and their family. My father, to whom I was extremely close, skipped three grades and graduated from high school at 16 before going off to work. I was the first in my family to go to college. My parents taught me the virtues of hard work and sacrifice; of honoring a handshake even when it works to your detriment; of taking away something positive from both victory and defeat. To treat everyone with respect and humility, whether king or pauper. To strive mightily but never put money and success on a pedestal, as they are hollow without personal integrity. These are the values I have tried to live by and instill in my three children – values which in this tragic instance I failed to uphold.

I grew up to feel natural empathy for others and know what it's like to struggle and to suffer. I've done my best to live a good, clean life and to treat others as I would like to be treated. Like many parents, I'm guilty of trying to spare my children pain, even while knowing that my most valuable life lessons have come from looking pain in the face. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Culpable and contrite as I am, I can state without reservation that I was not propping up an undeserving kid for my own narcissistic ambition, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], who in the realm of testing had the deck stacked against her. Tenuous as it was,

it was my only connection to her at the time. I offer this not as an excuse, but as an explanation for my serious ethical breach. To understand my terrible mistake, one needs to know my wonderful daughter. She is as authentic as they come. She worked as hard as anyone: performing in over 30 opera productions, singing in 6 different languages, earning excellent grades – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Because of unsustainable school absences she eventually had to switch to on-line schooling, which was when a well-meaning friend introduced us to Rick Singer for college counselling. Had it not been for on-line schooling, our paths never would have crossed. Regretfully, had my wife and I been in better communication and not separated, I am certain this aberrational scenario never would have unfolded. Once Singer revealed his true nature, we should have walked away; unfortunately, our marriage was dysfunctional and full of vitriol to the point of paralysis. Shame on us for not rising above it for the sake of the daughter we both believe in and adore, and for the sake of our own character and integrity that had brought us together in the first place.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Still, not wanting to feel further isolated, she insisted on soldiering on with college apps with the intent of taking a gap year. She knew nothing about our misguided attempts to help her, and when she saw her mother taken away in handcuffs, and learned that her father had been arrested as well, it traumatized her to say the least. I will never get over the anguish of knowing that I hurt my own innocent daughter.

That is not to say that my daughter is the only victim. I can imagine the affront to every teenager who worked hard and made sacrifices to achieve his or her college dream, and their parents who raised them to play by the rules and didn't have the means to hire tutors or game the system in the myriad of ways it's done. Believe me, I have seen it all in Manhattan – from nursery school to college. I myself have been offended by the sense of entitlement and the dizzying lengths parents go to promote *their* agendas for their children, concoct resumés, buy board seats, and pony up to schools that marginalize those families who can barely afford to pay the tuition. I've always tried to keep my distance from the culture of strung-out parents and stressed-out kids, which seems to be getting progressively worse and deserves a national discussion. I believe that elitism should have no place in a nation blessed with hundreds of fine universities, many of which can deliver an Ivy League-level education to anyone who applies oneself. I share the same sensibilities as most people and, strange as it may sound, identify with the public outrage over my own actions. It took the [REDACTED]; a marriage in dire crisis after 31 years; [REDACTED] who wasn't speaking to me; a crumbling family; acute business pressures; and the devastating death of my best friend for me to commit this act of desperation, simply to bring a modicum of relief to our existence. In many instances during my life, I have shown integrity and taken the right path under pressure, but in this perfect storm I buckled. I accept full shame and responsibility.

To every single soul demoralized or offended by my actions, I deeply apologize. While I believe my transgression should be viewed in the context of a problem much broader than 33 parents, it nevertheless betrayed the American Dream I so revere and violated our sense of shared values. While I believed Rick Singer that I was being altruistic, and helping disadvantaged kids, by having my foundation donate to his IRS-accredited foundation, I also knew [REDACTED] [REDACTED] would be getting some kind of help that was outside the rules. I didn't know exactly how and, frankly, I didn't want to know. I could go on endlessly with unflattering adjectives to describe my behavior, but I didn't appreciate that I was committing a felony or conspiring to commit mail fraud. Yes, I was under intense daily pressure, yet there are millions of people with pressures who still play by the rules. To all those souls who struggle every day to put food on the table and to get their kids access to college, I apologize for any sense of resentment or inequity my actions provoked, and humbly ask forgiveness. I want them to understand that I am not, nor ever have been, a schemer, but was acting out of love for my disabled, estranged daughter. Still, it was wrong and stupid, and I feel genuine remorse – not because I was caught, but because taking this shortcut diminished me in my own eyes. Pleading guilty, while excruciatingly painful and humiliating, was a relief. It has freed my conscience of a burden. I cannot imagine myself ever again abandoning my moral compass that otherwise has served me well for 69 years.

Your Honor, many dear friends have tried to console me that the system is flawed, that I, given my particular set of circumstances, did what many parents would have done to help their disabled child. My response to them has been unwavering: A parent's first duty is to teach his child right from wrong, and that in this case I set a miserable example. Back in May, my daughter flew in from Colorado to have dinner with me on my birthday and to attend her old school's prom two days later. She was so excited to reconnect with old friends and teachers, bought a dress, shoes, and a plane ticket for the occasion, only to have the school inform her (as she was boarding the plane) that she was prohibited from attending the prom because of Varsity Blues. That cowardly act broke her already fragile heart. My daughter is a beacon of innocence and virtue in this debacle who deserves empathy, admiration, and respect. While not proud of my own actions, I am incredibly proud of her. More than ever, I believe in the aphorism that we have as much to learn from our children as they from us. She has forgiven us. She has inspired and is uniting us. She has even re-connected with her brother, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Hearing them talk supportively to each other, reaffirming their love and lifting each other's spirits during this time of adversity, brings tears to my eyes. Our family is healing. Your Honor, all I ask is that you see me and especially my family as the decent people we are rather than the media stereotypes we are not, and know that I am truly sorry on every conceivable level.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Greg Abbott

Received

p.1

[REDACTED]

f [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Because of her dedication and love for singing, my daughter still made it to most of her performances, but it took everything out of her to do so. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Although her school tried to be accommodating, she began falling behind, and we found ourselves with mounting, costly tutoring fees for subjects which needed to be taught in person. We decided to move her to Laurel Springs, an online-schooling program, starting in November of 2017. This way she could work when she had energy and rest when she did not.

Junior year was touch and go, but we went ahead with a few college visits, not only because we wanted our daughter to have as normal a life as possible, but because she is a genuinely dedicated student who wants to study auto-immunology and how it affects psychology, since she'd experienced the subject first-hand. She worked through odd hours of the day and night to keep her grades high, [REDACTED]. Instead, she did online tours and researched various professors. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

My daughter and I were spending more and more time in Colorado, pretty much living out there by spring of 2018. Both of us were under different forms of tremendous stress, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], was living in our apartment, a situation I felt risked our safety and my daughter's psyche. I'd also recently discovered that my husband had had taken out large loans from our house in Aspen without discussing it with me. Numerous rugs had been ripped out from beneath me. Looking back, I would not have described myself as emotionally grounded or whole. Considering I have always been the one that others came to for strength and solace, that's a hard statement for me to make. I was overseeing and tutoring most of [REDACTED] academic courses, while at the same time despondent over the fractured state of my family and my mother's recent death. I was reaching out to professionals and [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I was first introduced to Rick Singer in mid-January of 2018 by a friend who knew of my fraught circumstances. According to her, Rick used to own Laurel Springs, but had sold it (something Mr. Singer later told me as well), and therefore did much of his college counseling in exchange

for donations to a charity for underserved schools and youth programs. I looked him up online and saw that he'd been in the business of college counseling for years. He seemed perfect for us, given that my husband and his father had set up a foundation years ago that gave to various causes. Although it was evident my daughter would have to take time off before attending college, I hoped that a specialist could help navigate a process that, considering her online schooling and illness, would be trickier than most. Besides, my daughter was determined to apply.

When I told Rick my husband had a foundation, he seemed immediately interested. He wanted to speak with my husband, and, at the same time, put my daughter in touch with a woman named Tatiana, whom he designated as her go-to person for all things college. I understood that his company was full-service - information about online schooling, test prep, essay-review, and advice on appropriate colleges for my daughter. I assumed he was telling the truth about having a charity, and referred him to my husband, who is responsible for the Abbott Foundation, in order to review a potential contribution.

Rick could be curt and even rude, but I was grateful to have someone to guide us. When I told him of my daughter's good grades and history with the Metropolitan Opera, he was unimpressed.

[REDACTED]s, he explained, and since she attended an online school she would be judged most heavily by standardized testing. When I cited some high practice test scores from New York - 30's on ACT's and mid-700's on SAT's

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] my daughter qualified for extra time on her standardized tests long before I met Rick Singer. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that he had a school where [REDACTED] could test with extra time now that the ACT had approved her, and be proctored by the head of the school who would "give her maximum time and make sure she does well." I didn't register at first what he meant by "making sure she would do well." [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and figured there was a whole world we didn't know about.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] but my daughter's priority was to force herself back to as close to a normal life as she could, and that meant college. I watched with concern as she continued to crack open ACT and SAT test books, popping Motrin for muscle

aches and napping, all while keeping up with her courses and writing her college essays. Her efforts were heroic, and I'm not exaggerating.

As time went on, it became clear that when Rick told me his center would "make sure my daughter did well" that he was talking about some kind of cheating [REDACTED] [REDACTED] he could not offer such a promise unless he was going out of bounds. I should have walked away, but by then I was saw him as a lifeline, and was afraid of what might happen to my daughter if I backed out. Looking back, I am horrified. What should have been flashing "danger" was registering instead as help. I failed to live up to the high moral standards I'd set for myself; standards that I have tried so hard to pass along to my children. Instead of walking away, I got in deeper.

The fact that my husband and I were separated at the time made this all the worse. I remember when Singer told me the amount Greg should have his foundation pay, I thought for sure Greg would reject it or push the amount way down. With all the bitterness that was going on between us, I wanted my husband to be the one to argue with Singer. I was surprised to learn from this case that Rick's charity was completely bogus. At the time, the idea that the money would be helping young people or schools was not only appealing, but made his company seem altruistic. I'm sure this aided in our self-justification of what we did.

Please know that we did not seek out a college advisor for any illegal purpose. We have never bought our children's way into any institution. We have never faked or forced our childrens' abilities or talents, nor would this have been imaginable to our children. Indeed, I have learned through many years of parenting that the two things one wishes for most - health and sobriety - cannot be coerced. I have never lacked confidence in my daughter's intelligence, work ethic, or her ability to do well on tests. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Both my husband and I would have done anything to relieve the stress she was placing on herself, and that made us extremely vulnerable.

Yet vulnerability, of course, is no excuse. I violated the law through the decisions we made. I understand the outrage of those who saw us as trying to game the system. Each day I try to find meaning as to why we met this man at the most fraught time in our family's life, and look for reasons as to why we were drawn into his world. In hindsight, I was broken, and woefully ill-equipped to be interacting with a man like Rick Singer. I betrayed my higher nature, and became part of a larger, damaging system. I take that very seriously, and take responsibility for it. Dismay, along with regret and contrition, accompany me every day.

I am heartbroken over what I have wrought for my daughter. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. As

for me, both personally and publicly, both as a mother and a life-long moral person, this case has

been overwhelming, painful, and filled with regret. I am so sorry, and accept full responsibility for what I have done.

I humbly ask that you might allow us to heal as a family; to regain our lives so that we can rebuild and contribute to each other and to our community with greater, hard-won wisdom. I appeal to your leniency, and accept and respect your judgment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Marcia M. Abbott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Marcia M. Abbott